OFFICE OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

BUSINESS PLAN 2002-03

March 8, 2002

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Minister

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Deputy Minister

OFFICE OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

A. Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs (OAA):

"To strengthen Government's ability to address Aboriginal issues for the benefit of all Nova Scotians, while respecting Mi'kmaq culture and building a sustainable framework for Mi'kmaq-Government relations."

B. Planning Context

Nova Scotia has 13 Mi'kmaq Bands with the population of these communities ranging from 206 in the Annapolis Valley First Nation to 3,356 in the Eskasoni First Nation. In total, there are 12,011 registered Indians in Nova Scotia as of December 31, 2000. Of these, 3,866 live off-reserve.[1] The registered Indian population in Nova Scotia is represented through a series of 13 band councils and two tribal councils, the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq and the Union of Nova Scotia Indians.

In addition, the Native Council of Nova Scotia is an off-reserve Aboriginal organization and the Natives Women's Association provide Aboriginal women with a voice in the social, cultural and economic development of the Aboriginal community.

As is the case in other regions of Canada, Aboriginal communities in Nova Scotia face significant socio-economic challenges with regard to health status, employment, education and economic development both on and off reserve. For example:

- 16% of the Aboriginal population in Nova Scotia have less than a Grade 9 education versus 11% for the non-Aboriginal population.[2]
- While 12% of the non-Aboriginal population have a university degree, only 6% of the Nova Scotia's Aboriginal population have completed university.[2]
- Nova Scotia Aboriginal youth unemployment rates were 27.7%. They were 33% more likely to be unemployed than their non-Aboriginal counterparts.[2]

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[1] Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Indian Register, December 31, 2000.

[2] A Statistical Profile of Aboriginal Youth in Canada, 1996 (September 1999).

- Unemployment rates for the non-Aboriginal labour force in 1996 was 13.1%, while the Aboriginal unemployment rate was 24.6%.[2]
- Aboriginals in Nova Scotia are only two-thirds as likely to be working full-time as are non-Aboriginals.[3]
- Average incomes in the Aboriginal population were two-thirds of the non-Aboriginal population in 1995 and half the Aboriginal population over 15 years of age had incomes less than $10,000 annually.[2]
- 34% of Nova Scotia Aboriginal Children (0-14) live in lone parent families and 9.9% do not live with their birth parents.[3]

The Federal Government has primary fiduciary duty and constitutional responsibility for Aboriginal peoples in Canada. At the Federal level, responsibility for Aboriginal people is split between Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (Aboriginals living on-reserve and Inuit) and the Privy Council Office (Aboriginals living off-reserve - Métis and non-status Indians).

The Province has a role to play in addressing socio-economic issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries. Nova Scotia also has representation in the Mi'kmaq-Canada-Nova Scotia Forum which deal with a range of socio-economic issues affecting Nova Scotia's First Nations. In addition, the Province deals directly with the Mi 'kmaq of Nova Scotia on a wide range of areas including taxation, gaming, and cultural issues.

Formed in 1998, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs is a central agency with a corporate role within the Government of Nova Scotia on Aboriginal matters. Over the next number of years the primary focus of the Office will be on leading the Province's involvement in a negotiation of treaty and related issues with the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq and the Government of Canada.

The key challenges facing OAA in the 2002-03 fiscal year include the following:

- Leading a comprehensive negotiation process with the Federal Government and the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia on treaty and related issues.
- Developing an Aboriginal policy framework to assist in the provision of consistent, quality strategic advice and an approach on Aboriginal matters within Government.
- Supporting a broader understanding and awareness of Aboriginal issues in Nova Scotia and engaging stakeholders in an appropriate manner.
- Working to ensure staff have the necessary skill levels to carry out their responsibilities in a complex and challenging environment.

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[3] Statistics Canada, Census 1996, Portrait of Aboriginal Population in Canada.

C. Strategic Goals

1. To represent Nova Scotians interests effectively in intergovernmental, bilateral and tri-party initiatives and negotiations.

2. To facilitate and support a coordinated approach within Government on matters related to Aboriginal issues.

3. To foster Aboriginal economic development and community capacity building across Nova Scotia.

4. To enhance awareness of Mi'kmaq culture.

5. To build a sustainable framework for First Nation-Government relations.

D. Core Business Areas

The Office of Aboriginal Affairs carries out its responsibilities through the following three core businesses areas:

1. **Negotiations and Related Discussions** - The Office of Aboriginal Affairs is responsible for coordinating the negotiation process and representing the province's interests in negotiations and related discussions with the Federal Government and Mi'kmaq.

2. **Aboriginal and Intergovernmental Relations** - This area includes working with Aboriginal communities and organizations and other levels of Government to coordinate Aboriginal initiatives, develop strategies, and build and maintain a sustainable framework for First Nation-Government relations.

3. **Interdepartmental Coordination, Policy Analysis and Strategic Advice** - This business area includes providing policy and strategic advice and support to departments and agencies concerning Aboriginal issues. The office also works with departments and agencies to develop and implement

the Government's overall approach to Aboriginal issues.

E. Priorities 2002-03

1. Negotiations and Related Discussions

- During the coming year, Nova Scotia will be negotiating a Framework Agreement with the Mi'kmaq and the Government of Canada. This Agreement will outline the process and procedures of negotiations and identify the substantive issues to be negotiated by the parties.

- During 2002-03, the Government will develop an approach on consultation required in certain specific circumstances. The approach will address the nature of and process regarding Government's consultation with Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq and will address the specific needs of provincial departments and agencies.

- The Office of Aboriginal Affairs will continue to coordinate provincial departments and agencies input into and participation in negotiations of treaty rights and related issues. This corporate approach to preparing for negotiations will ensure provincial interests are fully identified and represented through the negotiations process.

- The Office of Aboriginal Affairs will develop and implement a strategy to enhance public awareness and understanding on the negotiation process. Creating public understanding is critical to the successful resolution of these issues. OAA will need to utilize a range of strategic communication methods to increase public awareness and knowledge of the processes.

- The Government will take steps to ensure that the interests of municipalities, third parties and other stakeholders are understood and respected. This will involve clearly identifying stakeholders interests and developing a mechanism to provide timely and accurate information.

2. Aboriginal and Intergovernmental Relations

- At the National level, Nova Scotia is a committed participant in the

Federal/Provincial/Territorial/Aboriginal (FPTA) Forum. As a result, we will continue to work with our colleagues in the National Forum to identify practical solutions to issues facing Aboriginal people. In the coming year, we will be achieving progress on the identified priorities in the areas of strengthening Aboriginal participation in the economy report and youth. At the provincial level, OAA will work with departments to identify opportunities and build capacities to adapt provincial approaches to the national strategies.

- The Office of Aboriginal Affairs will continue to meet with other Maritime officials to pursue information sharing and collaborative opportunities.

- The Government is party to the Mi'kmaq-Canada-Nova Scotia Tripartite Forum. OAA will continue to coordinate provincial involvement on the Mi'kmaq-Canada-Nova Scotia Tripartite Forum with our Federal and Mi'kmaq counterparts. With the introduction of the treaty and related issues negotiation, the Forum will be focused on addressing social and economic issues of mutual interest.

- OAA will provide support for the 10th annual Mi'kmaq Treaty Day events held at Province House in the Fall of 2002.

- OAA will continue to provide a corporate approach on bilateral and trilateral initiatives with departments, Governments and Aboriginal entities to develop working relations, provide information, develop skills, enhance awareness and facilitate effective discussions to reach common understanding and mutually acceptable approaches.

3. Interdepartmental Coordination, Policy Analysis and Strategic Advice

- With the assistance of departments and agencies, OAA will work on developing and implementing an Aboriginal Policy Framework to guide Government's overall approach to Aboriginal issues. The Policy Framework will be consistent with and support Government's overall strategic direction on economic and social policy. This Framework will enhance the effectiveness, efficiency and provide a strategic approach to Government's response on Aboriginal issues, as well as clarity with respect to roles and responsibilities.

- OAA will use a network of interdepartmental teams to support a coordinated approach to negotiations and other Aboriginal issues.

- OAA will ensure that appropriate communication tools are developed and implemented for sharing

information with departments and agencies. For example, OAA will develop and implement interdepartmental protocols and policies to ensure a more consistent and coordinated approach to addressing Aboriginal issues.

- OAA will continue to work closely with departments and agencies to provide advice and support to them in defining their approaches to addressing Aboriginal issues.

- OAA will facilitate processes within Government to enhance cultural awareness of Mi'kmaq people. In the last year, a total of 120 participants from 17 departments have taken the *Orientation to Mi'kmaq First Nation Culture* course. In the coming year, OAA will be focusing on another course that will build on the knowledge obtained in the *Orientation to Mi'kmaq First Nation Culture* course by providing basic knowledge and skills that will enable them to work more effectively with Aboriginal communities and organizations in Nova Scotia.

- The office will identify, prepare and distribute Aboriginal related research and information for use by provincial departments and agencies. This includes identifying research needs and priorities, conducting research, and ensuring it is properly distributed to departments and agencies.

4. Human Resources

- Given the complexity of issues and technical expertise required within the Office, OAA is committed to the Government wide goal of a professional public service. The Office is committed to building staff strengths and diverse skills to ensure staff have the competencies necessary to achieve current and future goals of the Office. This can be achieved by providing ongoing team-building and professional development opportunities for staff. In addition, OAA will continue to work with other agencies and departments to ensure the appropriate skill levels exist within Government to effectively deal with Aboriginal issues.

F. Budget Context

The Office of Aboriginal Affairs has a budget of approximately $2.1 million and a staff of twelve (12) full-time equivalents (FTE). In the coming fiscal year, the budget of OAA will be distributed to Core Business Areas as follows:

Core Business Area	2000-01 Actuals	2002-03 Budget
Negotiation and Related Discussions	$ 384,862	$ 999,600
Aboriginal and Intergovernmental Relations	505,442	319,200
Interdepartmental Coordination, Policy Analysis and Strategic Advice	478,143	330,900
Administration and Support *	461,363	519,300
Total - Gross Current	**$ 1,829,810**	**$ 2,169,000**
Salaries and Benefits	**$ 695,259**	**$ 671,857**
Full Time Equivalents (FTEs)	**11.6**	**12.1**

* Please note that this area includes Senior Administration (CEO and support), Office Administrator, Communications and support staff as well as general office overhead included in Supplies and Services and Other budget areas that could not be readily assigned to any one core business area.

Core Business Area: Negotiations and Related Discussions					
Outcome	**Indicator**	**Measure**	**Baseline Measures**	**Target 2004/05**	**Strategies to Achieve Target**
Fair and timely resolution to issues of Mutual Concern.	Progress on the negotiated resolution of issues of mutual concern.	Framework Agreement on negotiation of Treaty and related issues.	No Framework Agreement currently in place.	Framework Agreement by March 31, 2004.	• Identification of issues of mutual concern. • Negotiation of an agreeable process by which discussions between the three parties are able to take place. • Internal preparation for negotiations through a network of bilateral and interdepartmental work teams.
		Agreements in other, non-treaty related areas.	To be established in 2002-03.	Maximizing opportunities to resolve issues through agreement	• Initiation, coordination and facilitation of discussions in areas such as the fuel tax exemption and gaming.
	An appropriate process for Aboriginal consultation in Nova Scotia.	Development and implementation of consultation process with Aboriginal people and communities.	No Consultation Approach currently in place.	Consultation Approach by March 31, 2004.	• Internal development of corporate approach to consultation issues. • Initiation of discussions with the Federal Government and the Mi'kmaq on principles and guidelines for a consultation process in Nova Scotia.
	Public and key stakeholders understand and are aware of negotiations process.	Level of public and key stakeholders understanding and awareness of the negotiations process.	Baseline to be established in June 2002.	Ongoing public education, surveys, focus groups, and assessments.	• Defining stakeholder involvement • Implementation of an appropriate mechanism to engage stakeholders and the general public in discussions and to communicate the issues and progress of negotiations. • Produce and distribute material related to the negotiation process in a timely and effective manner.
Core Business Area: Interdepartmental Coordination, Policy Analysis and Strategic Advice					

Outcome	Indicator	Measure	Baseline Measures	Target 2004/05	Strategies to Achieve Target
An effective corporate approach to addressing Aboriginal issues in Nova Scotia.	Understanding and satisfaction with the corporate role played by OAA in addressing Aboriginal issues.	Level of understanding and satisfaction expressed by departments and agencies as measured in client surveys and assessments.	Baseline to be established by June 2002.	Continual improvement in level of client satisfaction.	• Ongoing identification of cross-departmental Aboriginal issues. • Continuation of interdepartmental work teams and committees to enable departments and agencies to address Aboriginal issues. • Continuation of strategic advice and policy analysis to departments and agencies. • Development of an Aboriginal policy framework to address Aboriginal issues in Nova Scotia • Ongoing participation and coordination of Provincial role in the Mi'kmaq-Canada-Nova Scotia Tripartite Forum. • Participation and representation in national and regional initiatives, such as the Federal/Provincial/Territorial/Aboriginal Forum of Ministers/Leaders and the Sustainable Communities Initiative. • Working with departments and agencies to apply national strategies to provincial approaches.
	Reflection of aboriginal issues in the development of corporate policies and strategic approaches.	Number of corporate policies or strategic approaches that reflect an Aboriginal component.	Baseline data to be established in 2002-03.	A consistent and coordinated policy approach to Aboriginal issues across Government.	

Core Business Area: All Core Business Areas					
Outcome	**Indicator**	**Measure**	**Baseline Measures**	**Target 2004/05**	**Strategies to Achieve Target**

Greater awareness of Mi'kmaq culture in Nova Scotia.	Increased awareness of Mi'kmaq culture in Nova Scotia.	Number of public servants completing cultural awareness training.	120 public servants have taken cultural awareness training to date.	Increase in overall number of public servants taking training courses.	• Ongoing development and institution of cultural awareness training for departments and agencies. • General awareness raising and education initiatives linked to negotiation and other processes including the development and dissemination of information and educational material.